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Letter from Richard Caswell to John Rutledge
Caswell, Richard, 1729-1789
May 26, 1779
Volume 14, Pages 99-101

GOV. CASWELL TO PRES'T RUTLEDGE, OF SOUTH CAROLINA.
[From Executive Letter Book.]

Kingston, 26th May, 1779.

Dear Sir:

I had your Excellency's favor, of the 4th Inst., acquainting me that the enemy had entered the Southern parts of your State. This intelligence I sent to the Governor of Virginia, but I am apprehensive no further succours will shortly be sent you from that State, the enemy having entered there with one 64 Gun Ship, one of 20 Guns, a Row Galley carrying one 24 pounder in her Bow, one 18-pounder in the Stern, and 6 nine pounders, one or two more smaller Gallies, a number of small privateers and armed vessels, and about 16 large Transport Ships, having on board when they first arrived five Regiments, viz.: 2 British, one Irish, one Hessian and one of Chasseurs or German Riflemen, with a number of Tories, among whom old Goodrich is the principal. They landed at Portsmouth without opposition, the Garrison consisting of 80 men, having fled on their approach, a great number of vessels with valuable property fell into the enemy's hands, a detachment of about 400 men was sent to Suffolk, who burnt that Town and destroyed a large quantity of Pork, salt and

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Tobacco, belonging to the public, and a great variety of valuable property belonging to individuals, and then returned to the neighborhood of Portsmouth without the least opposition, driving in all the Horses, cattle, sheep and stock of every kind they could find, also plundering women and children, burning houses, and committing every kind of outrage that could enter the head of a licentious soldiery. These exploits were performed from the 10th to the 16th of this month. The Enemy have since been employed in throwing up intrenchments across from the western to the southern Branches of Elizabeth and Norfolk River at two different places, one near Portsmouth, and the other 10 or 12 miles above; on one side of each they are covered by their shipping; from these posts they sally out daily in quest of Plunder. The Virginians, who seemed to have been in a kind of stupor at first, are now assembling fast, and some of our Militia bordering on that State have turned out to their assistance. Edenton and some other parts of this State are threatened with a visit from the enemy. Under these circumstances you can scarcely expect any more of our Militia to be marched to the Southward at this time. We are endeavoring to complete our Continental Battalions by exempting every 10 Militia men, who shall enlist one man to serve 18 months or longer, from Military duty, except on an Invasion or Insurrection, for so long a time as the person they enlist engages to serve the United States. This mode is new here, and what effect it may have I know not, but if 200 men are not raised by the first of July, the deficiency is to be made up by drafts from the Militia, all of which will be sent on to your State. Application has been made to Congress to send the two Battalions we have to the Northward, to your Assistance. Upwards of 1,500 stand of arms and a quantity of fixed ammunition from Congress were lately sent to your State in a parcel of Wagons belonging to this, and I understand a further supply is now halted at or near New Bern for want of wagons. 'Twas with great difficulty we got the last wagons, and I am fearful if the arms are wanting to the Southward they cannot be sent on until the wagons return, but if the arms are not really much wanted, we should be very glad to have them delivered out here, that in case of an Invasion on this State we may be able to make some better defence than we could at present, with the few and very

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ordinary arms we have. If this may be done, you will be pleased to inform me by the return of the Bearer or first opportunity.

R. CASWELL.

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